

## **Summary Minutes**

### **Alexandria Waterfront Committee Meeting Tuesday, March 15, 2011**

#### **Alexandria City Hall**

##### **Members**

**Present:** Engin Artemel, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St.  
Jay Atkinson, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St  
Christine Bernstein, Founders Park Community Association  
Mel Fortney, Citizen east of Washington St. and south of King St.  
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina pleasure boat lease holder  
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce  
Nathan Macek, At-large citizen and Chair  
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)  
Peter Pennington, Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)  
Pete Peterson, Archaeological Commission  
Paul Smedberg, Alexandria City Council  
Robert Taylor, Alexandria Seaport Foundation  
Van Van Fleet, Old Town Civic Association

**Excused:** William Cromley, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission  
Linda Hafer, Old Town Business Association

**City Staff:** Jack Browand, Recreation, Parks, Cultural Activities (RPCA)  
Terrance Davis, General Services  
Lt. Len Fouch, Police Department  
Jim Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA  
Nancy Williams, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)

**Guests:** Brian Buzzell  
John Goslin, Old Town Civic Association  
Joanne Platt

##### **Welcome and Introductions**

Committee members and guests introduced themselves.

##### **Approval of Minutes**

Moved by Pennington, second by Taylor to approve the February 15, 2011 meeting minutes as drafted. Motion carried on a voice vote.

Moved by Pennington, second by Bernstein to approve the March 3, 2011 workshop minutes as drafted. Motion carried on a voice vote with Smedberg abstaining.

### **Report from Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities**

Browand reported the Waterfront to be in good post-storm condition as staff works to finish storm debris cleanup. Staff pre-storm preparations and the volunteer assistance picking up floating debris was highlighted.

The Godspeed's expected docking in October 2011, both an educational and visitor-oriented event, has been approved by City Council.

Hixon reported that the Marina water will be turned on by the end of March and pre-season maintenance issues are being addressed. 70 slips will be available this year. 80% of owners have returned so far. Five new slips will be available. Slips damaged last year are being repaired.

Smedberg reported complaints received about parking near Harborside that blocks the trail in Windmill Hill Park and asked RPCA to coordinate with other City agencies on actions to discourage this parking.

Gosnell shared a letter sent to the head of the DC Harbor Patrol advising that despite DC ticketing boats moored at the pierhead for not having DC permits, the area within the pierhead line is within Virginia jurisdiction. Also, after a long discussion about wake problems, two "No Wake" signs will be put up within the next 30 days at north and south of Old Town.

In response to a question from Pennington, Hixon advised that the Marina tests electricity before opening for the season, and that boat owners do not receive the level of power they expect due to outdated Marina wiring, but that additional Marina power will be made available this year.

### **City of Alexandria FY12 Budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP)**

Browand provided a budget overview. A summary sheet of the RPCA CIP through FY2021 was shared. Seawalls and other repairs are addressed in the CIP. The budget is scheduled to be adopted in early May. Development of next year's budget begins this summer. The CIP fluidity was noted. Founders Park lighting is being repaired. Lighting issues have been surveyed along the Waterfront and all Waterfront lighting should be working within two to three weeks.

Browand reported that Marina staffing will be reviewed over the next two to three months. RPCA hopes to change the two assistant dockmaster positions from part-time to full-time. Funds should be available. A Marina maintenance boat is expected to be purchased within two to three months. No across-the-board fee increases are planned, but transient boater fees for FY13 might be reviewed. Marina security is being upgraded. The current camera system does not work at the level expected. A new system that works on cell phone technology will increase coverage, transmit both live and recorded images, and be viewable via the Web, enabling boat owners to view the area via the Web in real-time. RPCA is working with TES to discuss other ways to improve Marina security.

Browand encouraged Members to report sidewalks needing repair directly into the City's sidewalk repair system.

Waterfront Plan implementation would initially be funded as an operating expense to ramp up for capital expenditure beginning in FY13.

Pennington asked if safety- and/or security-related issues might move up bulkhead repairs in Windmill Park and Founders Park. Currently \$25 million is budgeted for FY17. RPCA's Planning Division is working on an internal CIP planning process which would create a formal procedure for RPCA commissions and committees (including the Waterfront Committee) to provide direct input into the process.

#### **Report from Department of General Services – Dockmaster Hut Update**

Davis reported that the project is expected to be completed by the first week of April. The Dockmaster and staff will then be able to move back in.

#### **Report from Police Department**

Fouch provided an update. He will be assuming a new Department position and Lt. Mark Bergen will assume the responsibilities for Patrol Sector 1. Fouch noted that the Police Department benefits from its continuing interactions with the Committee on security issues. Fouch reported 8 offenses occurring near the Waterfront during the previous month, several drug- and alcohol-related. Larcenies from vehicles remain a citywide problem—especially from vehicles left unlocked. The National Park Service has taken over the homicide investigation of human remains found at Jones Point.

#### **Report from Economic Development Subcommittee**

Hall provided a list of planned weekend Waterfront activities developed by the Economic Subcommittee and invited further ideas. Due to existing commitments, Fresh Farm Markets, potential operators of a Waterfront farmers market, cannot open a market in Alexandria until 2012. Planning for the 2012 season will begin now. Hall suggested a presentation by Fresh Farm to the Committee in September 2011.

There will be small-scale activities each weekend May through October in the City Marina area with events organized by the Torpedo Factory artists, Alexandria Archeology and Historic Alexandria, and the Alexandria Seaport Foundation. Alexandria Seaport Day is planned but not yet scheduled. Small performances are likely in the gazebo with music kept below a nuisance level. Waterfront Park activities will be coordinated with RPCA. ACVA will publicize events and both local newspapers have agreed to run free publicity. Taylor noted the inequity of the Seaport Foundation being charged the standard \$1000 fee per day for their Waterfront Park activities when historic vessels often have their docking fees waived.

Members discussed their concerns about the Food Pavilion being poorly utilized. Williams suggested the Committee invite landlord Gary Baker to brief them.

Moved by Artemel, second by Bernstein to endorse the proposed Waterfront activities planned for 2011, including a formal launch to the weekend activity season. The motion carried on unanimous voice vote.

### **Waterfront Small Area Plan**

Committee members considered the Waterfront Plan and the text of a draft letter written by Macek to reflect the Committee's March 3 workshop discussion of the Plan.

Committee members generally agreed the City needs a Waterfront plan, recognizing that if the City fails to pass a plan soon it would leave the Waterfront open to piecemeal development choices. Members agreed the Waterfront area is in need of revitalization, and without it there would be potential long-term threats to its economic vitality. Manor reminded Committee members that back in the 1960s and 1970s King Street was not a particularly desirable place, and Committee members were concerned that actions to keep the Waterfront vital are especially important in light of the strong regional competing waterfronts. In this light, there was enthusiasm for the Plan's concept.

However, members were concerned that it is not clear if the City Council and Planning Commission are being asked to decide upon the Plan's concepts or its details. The Plan's concept can vary over the next 15 years and, Pennington noted, proposed details such as hydrology issues, pier extension, responsibility for running the proposed new Marina, should be viewed as illustrative and not prescriptive.

Committee members agreed to send a letter to the Planning Commission before the Plan is considered by the Commission on April 5. The Planning Commission anticipates two Plan-related meetings, including a public hearing, in April and May. Williams said the Council will need to take two actions: first adopt the Plan as a concept plan, and then approve a text amendment to the zoning ordinance.

Williams said the Plan states the concept is "illustrative only", and that when Council adopts the Plan more details will be added and the technical feasibility of the Plan's proposed concepts determined. A complete engineering and design analysis will be needed to determine whether its illustrative images can be implemented. For example, a hotel would be an allowable use for a site, but hotel details need to be worked out.

Bernstein noted that the community had indicated at public meetings that they want both a hotel and a museum to be considered as concepts. Many residents do not feel their inputs are reflected in the Plan.

Members noted that Council voting on a zoning ordinance text amendment at the same time as the Plan would finalize many of the Plan's concepts. Artemel suggested that when the Planning Commission and Council act on the Plan they should approve it as a "study" to facilitate the incorporation of further comments before its concepts are finalized as a Master Plan amendment.

Bernstein and other Members were concerned that passing a text amendment together with the Plan would tip the balance towards hotel development—especially since hotels

are planning to put in letters of intent for the Plan's proposed sites. The proposed text amendment would add Hotel as allowable use under W-1 zoning. She emphasized the need to balance commercial use with cultural uses and parking considerations.

Macek said that the draft letter put before the Committee for review and modification represented a middle position on the Plan's proposed hotel concept as it was discussed at the March 3 Committee workshop—especially on the question of whether three waterfront hotels is the appropriate number. Van Fleet said the Plan is too ambitious, has too much commercial development, and raises significant issues affecting the National Park Service and Army Corps of Engineers jurisdictional responsibilities. A guest said that approving the Plan concept as-is would rule out alternative non-hotel Waterfront site uses such as museum, Art League, Alexandria Seaport Foundation and other uses. Williams said that the sites in question are privately owned. She said that Plan proposals would increase density on those sites by approximately 40 per cent.

Smedberg said that the Plan should include more attention to flood mitigation issues and how they might impact Waterfront revitalization choices. They should be considered along the entire Waterfront and not just in the foot of King Street area. Noting that tidal issues and sea level change are real concerns, Smedberg mentioned a recent National Public Radio news story featuring several Virginia communities further south on the tidal Potomac and Chesapeake Bay that are already implementing plans to accommodate sea level and tidal changes.

Members had major concerns that the City needs to make it clear the Plan is only a concept document, not an implementation one. Pennington said that the EPC was also unsure where concepts stop and implementation starts in the draft Plan. If the Plan were an implementation document it lacks adequate details on many important areas. Van Fleet said that environmental remediation that would be required at Robinson Terminal sites, though Manor suggested the developer would be responsible for addressing this. Williams said that the responses P&Z is drafting in response to a Council request for more Plan details would answer some of the Committee's questions.

Pennington and Artemel suggested the Committee create a standing Implementation Subcommittee to facilitate active and ongoing interaction between the Committee, RPCA and City Planning staff about how to implement the Plan's details as they evolve. Artemel said the Plan's details had not been developed via a sufficiently participatory process over the past two years. For example, P&Z did not show the Committee the same evolving details as had been made available to the Planning Commission and Council. Bernstein said Alexandria residents are frustrated that the draft Plan's evolution did not reflect community inputs. The Committee will continue to consider the idea to create a subcommittee to advise implementation.

Pennington said that City planners face a challenge when balancing the needs of development and the revenue it generates with the interests of both Alexandria communities directly on the Waterfront and non-Waterfront Alexandria neighborhoods. Van Fleet said he resented the idea that Old Town residents are often viewed only as

naysayers, referencing a Windmill Hill Park Plan that a resident had developed and offered to finance privately that was rejected by the City. He said it was time to sit down and consider what is negotiable and what should be the right land-use mix. Even if civic and cultural uses may not be forthcoming, the Plan needed to address them. Some issues that have made Alexandria unique were not addressed.

Several members want the City to develop a mechanism to generate ideas to produce Waterfront-related revenue to fund cultural site uses, but the Committee recognized that the tight City budget makes it unrealistic to expect revenues generated by Waterfront development to be used only for Waterfront activities. Artemel proposed that the City initiate a citywide discussion with residents about the type of Waterfront they want to have and how much they are willing to pay for non-commercial, cultural uses via taxes.

Williams explained that P&Z's support for increasing density up to 40 percent is a way to balance revenue generation and remain within existing W-1 zoning height restrictions. P&Z has no plans to remove or amend existing height restrictions for the proposed hotels. Williams explained that the City's current 70% hotel occupancy rate does not rule out additional hotels because the industry standard views a 67% occupancy rate as the trigger for developing additional hotel space.

Gosling urged that the Plan couple increased density with greater City control over design and quality of build-out. Williams questioned whether a developer would agree to increased City control, and noted that a developer's eventual hotel design choices would require them to work with P&Z and the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and BAR always pays close attention to design.

Moved by Artemel, second by Pennington, to draft a letter to the Planning Commission that describes the Committee's concerns regarding approval schedule upfront, states the Committee's support to adopt the Plan at this time as a study, and supports continuing discussion of Plan details with further deliberation on adopting the Master Plan and zoning ordinance text amendments. In addition, the motion recommended that the letter address flood mitigation and parking. The Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Manor said he opposed the Plan's concept for additional sit-down restaurants in the Food Pavilion and supported language encouraging uses other than additional sit-down restaurants. Williams suggested the Committee invite lessee Gary Baker to brief on this issue.

### **Waterfront Committee Meeting Schedule**

The Committee discussed the idea of changing its monthly meeting time from 7:30 a.m. on Tuesdays. Several members said that a later meeting time might be more convenient. After considering several possible alternatives it was decided to keep the meeting time as is at 7:30 a.m. on the third Tuesday of the month.

**Announcements**

Pennington announced a program being sponsored that evening by the EPC regarding "Climate Change Science: The Basics, and Latest Research Findings."

Macek reminded Members of the Alexandria Planning Commission Hearing on the Waterfront Small Area Plan on Tuesday, April 5, 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers at Alexandria City Hall.

Hall announced that the next Economic Development Subcommittee meeting is Thursday, April 14, 2011, 5:00 p.m., at the Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion.

Macek announced that the next Alexandria Waterfront Committee meeting will be Tuesday, April 19, 2011, at 7:30 a.m. in Room 2000 of City Hall.

**Adjournment**

Pennington moved to adjourn, Bernstein seconded. The meeting was adjourned without objection at 9:50 a.m.